

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-04

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /005 R

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APPROVED BY:NEA/ARP:FMDICKMAN

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R 202056Z JUL 73

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 143158

CINCEUR FOR POLAD AND J-2

FOLLOWING WAS SENT ACTION STATE INFO ABU DHABI AMMAN BEIRUT
CAIRO KHARTOUM LONDON MANAMA SANAA TEHRAN TRIPOLI BERN
BRUSSELS FROM JIDDA 15 JUL 73 RPT TO YOU QUOTE

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SA

SUBJECT: ARAFAT IS INTRODUCED TO DIPLOMATIC CORPS

SUMMARY: UNEXPECTED AND UNWELCOME GUEST LAST EVENING
AT KING'S DINNER FOR RULER OF BAHRAIN WAS YASSER ARAFAT,
WHO APPEARED IN SALON WITH KING AND SHEIKH ISSA JUST AS
PROTOCOL OFFICER FORMING UP DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND OTHER
GUESTS IN LINE TO BE INTRODUCED. AMBASSADORS, CHARGES
AND OTHERS WENT THROUGH LINE AS SAUDIS HAD ARRANGED IT RAHTER
THAN CREATE INCIDENT BY TURNING AWAY FROM KING, WHO HAD ARAFAT
WITH HIM IN RECEIVING LINE. SWISS, TURKISH AMBASSADORS AND DUTCH
CONSUL ALSO CONSIDERABLY DISTURBED. SINCE NO ONE KNEW ARAFAT
COMING, FELT WE HAD TO DEGREE BEEN TRICKED. AMB PROPOSES CALL
ON DEPUTY FONMIN POINT OUT THAT WHILE CHIEFS OF MISSIONS HAVE
OBLIGATION RESPOND FOR ANY OCCASION TO WHICH CHIEF OF STATE
REQUESTS THEIR PRESENCE, AT SAME TIME THEY HAVE RIGHT KNOW AHEAD OF
TIME WHO IS COMING AND TO SEND REGRETS AND EXPLANATION IF THEY
BELIEVE THEY MIGHT BE EMBARRASSED BY CIRCUMSTANCES. WE WISH MAKE
SAUDIS AWARE WE BELIEVE SERIOUS BREACH OF COURTESY WAS MADE.
END SUMMARY.

1. UNPLEASANT INCIDENT OCCURRED LAST NIGHT AT KING'S DINNER FOR
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RULER OF BAHRAIN. BEFORE DINNER DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND SENIOR
SAUDI OFFICIALS AND PROMINENT CITIZENS WERE ASSEMBLED IN LARGE
RECEPTION HALL ADJOINING DINING ROOM OF PLACE. CHIEF OF PROTOCOL HAD
DIPLOMATIC CORPS PARTIALLY LINED UP TO PASS BY KING

AND BE GREETED BY HIM AND SHEIKH ISSA. AS KING AND ISSA THEN ENTERED RECEPTION HALL WE NOTICED ANOTHER MILITARY FIGURE PRESENT WHO

TURNUED OUT TO BE NONE OTHER THAN YASSER ARAFAT, WHO WAS PLACED IN RECEPTION LINE ALONG SIDE BAHRAINI RULER. I MADE SPLIT SECOND DECISION PROCEED WITH INTRODUCTIONS AS SAUDIS HAD SET THEM UP, AS DID ALL OTHER AMBASSADORS AND CHARGES, IN ORDER TO AVOID CREATING INCIDENT IN PRESENCE KING AND OTHER SENIOR MEMBERS ROYAL FAMILY. SHEIKH ISSA LOOKED CONSIDERABLY DISCOMFITED; AFTER INTRODUCTIONS WE WERE TAKEN DIRECTLY INTO DINING ROOM. ARAFAT HAD ONLY FEW MINUTES BEFORE DINNER ARRIVED FROM VISIT TO KUWAIT.

2. USUALLY WHEN MEAL IS COMPLETED AT SUCH AFFAIRS THERE IS EXCHANGE OF COMPLIMENTARY SPEECHES BETWEEN KING AND HONORED GUEST AND OFTEN COURT POET DELIVERS THETORICAL PRAISE OF KING AND HIS GUEST. LAST EVENING KING, ALONG WITH SHEIKH ISSA, ARAFAT, CROWN PRINCE, DEAN OF DIPLOMATIC CORPS (TUNISIAN), BAHRAIN FOMINISTER, AND OTHERS, AROSE IMMEDIATELY FROM HEAD TABLE AFTER LAST COURSE AND WALKED BACK INTO SALON. IT WAS OBSERVED THAT THROUGHOUT DINNER NO ONE AT HEAD TABLE SPOKE A WORD TO ANYONE ELSE. KING LINGERED IN SALON FOR SOME TEN MINUTES WHILE ARAB COFFEE WAS SERVED, AFTER WHICH KING AND HIS GUESTS OF HONOR DEPARTED FOLLOWED BY REST OF ASSEMBLAGE.

3. AT FRENCH NATIONAL DAY PARTY AFTERWARDS I COMPARED NOTES WITH SWISS AND TURKISH AMBASSADORS AND WITH MANAGER OF DUTCH BANK HERE WHO IS ALSO DUTCH CONSUL. ALL WERE INDIGNANT AT WHAT HAD HAPPENED, PARTICULARLY DUTCH CONSUL SINCE SAQQAF HAD CALLED HIM PERSONALLY IN LATER PART OF AFTERNOON URGING HIM TO ATTEND. NONE OF US HAD ANY IDEA ARAFAT WAS TO BE THERE. SWISS IS FEARFUL OF CRITICISM FROM HIS GOVT FOR HAVING STAYED AT AFFAIR. ADMITTED TO HIM SOME MISGIVINGS ON MY OWN PART, BUT WE CONCLUDED PROBABLY WE HAD DONE ONLY THING POSSIBLE RATHER THAN TURN ON HEELS IN MANNER THAT WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE BEEN NOTICED BY KING PERSONALLY, SHEIKH ISSA, AND OTHERS IN RETINUE.

4. HOWEVER, IN AFTERMATCH WE SHOULD NOT LET INCIDENT PASS

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UNNOTICED. FACT THAT NO ONE KNEW IN ADVANCE ARAFAT WAS TO BE PRESENT SMACKS OF TRICK OR INCREDIBLE LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF SITUATION. (I AM INCLINED SUSPECT SAQQAF. WHEN I CALLED ON HIM LAST WEEK TO DISCUSS KHALATBARI VISIT, HE FOUND OPPORTUNITY GET OFF HIS USUAL BITTER COMMENTS ABOUT US SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL AND REMARKS INDICATING USG HAD BEST PAY ATTENTION TO VIEW POINT OF HIMSELF AND KING. "RATHER THAN ANYONE ELSE YOU MAY BE SEEING IN GOVT.")

5. ACCORDINGLY, IF DEPT CONCURS, I PLAN CALL ON DEPUTY FOMINISTER MAS'UD AT FIRST AVAILABLE OPPORTUNITY, POINT OUT TO HIM MOST EMPHATICALLY THAT I AM COMING TO HIM ON INSTRUCTIONS TO SAY THAT WE BELIEVE A BREACH OF COURTESY WAS COMMITTED AT KING'S DINNER FOR SHEIKH ISSA. AMBASSADORS TO HOST COUNTRY HAVE

ALWAYS, OF COURSE, IMPORTANT OBLIGATION BE PRESENT ON ANY OCCASION WHEN THEIR PRESENCE IS REQUIRED BY CHIEF OF STATE. AT SAME TIME, AMBASSADORS HAVE RIGHT TRANSMIT EXPLANATION TO CHIEF OF STATE IF THEY CAN FORESEE IN ADVANCE THAT THEIR ATTENDANCE WOULD PUT THEM IN DIFFICULT OR EMBARRASSING CIRCUMSTANCES. IN THIS CASE FONMINISTRY CLEARLY HAD OBLIGATION NOTIFY US IN ADVANCE OF ARFAT'S PRESENCE, SINCE IT WAS OUR IMPORESSION DINNER ONLY IN HONOR OF BAHRAIN RULER AND WE SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN TAKEN BY SURPRISE BY PRESENCE OF ANOTHER GUEST OF HONOR UNACCEPTABLE TO US. IF NECESSARY WOULD REPEAT TO MAS'UD PRECISELY WHY WE CONTNUE HAVE DEEP SUSPICIONS RE ARAFAT. (TRADITIONAL SAUDI POSITION IS, OF COURSE, THAT HE REPRESENTS PALESTINIAN "MODERATES" AS AGAINST OTHER COMMUNIST-LINING PALESTINIAN GROUPS.) HAD I KNOWN ARAFAT WAS TO BE HONORED ALONG WITH SHEIKH ISSA, I WOULD HAVE SENT MESSAGE TO KING REQUESTING HIS KIND PERMISSION TO BE EXCUSED. WE WISH TO DRAW TO FONMINISTRY'S ATTENTION, THEREFORE WHAT WE CONSIDER TO BE SERIOUS ERROR IN HOW IT HANDLED MATTER. (WOULD APPRECIATE DEPT'S CONFIRMATION THAT ANALYSIS OF COURTESY ISSUE AS GIVEN ABOVE IS CORRECT).

6. BELIEVE IT BEST TO TALK TO MAS'UD RATHER THAN SAQQAF AS LATTER HAS BECOME SO VERY BITTER, ALMOST IRRATIONAL ON ANYTHING RELATED TO ARAB-ISRAEL AFFAIRS.

7. IN SUM, WE WANT SAUDIS TO BE UNMISTAKENLY CLEAR THAT WE OBJECT STRONGLY TO WAY MATTER WAS HANDLED IN TERMS OF COURTESY AND PROTOCOL ENTIRELY ASIDE FROM ANY POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS. INTEND AVOID IF POSSIBLE, HOWEVER, ENGAGING AGAIN IN LONG PROBABLY FRUITLESS DISCUSSION ABOUT WHICH PALESTINIANS RESPONSIBLE FOR WAHT REGARDING KHARTOUM TRAGEDY, ISRAELI RAID ON BEIRUT, ETC. CONFIDENTIAL

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8. I WOULD PLAN INFORM SWISS AMB AND BELGIAN CHARGE OF WHAT I HAVE DONE.

9. WOULD APPRECIATE DEPT'S VIEWS SOONEST. THATCHER UNQUOTE RUSH

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<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 10 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 JUL 1973
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: worrelsw
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973STATE143158
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter:
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730768/abqcemww.tel
Line Count: 147
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ORIGIN NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: worrelsw
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03-Oct-2001 by elyme>; APPROVED <27 FEB 2002 by worrelsw>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status:
Subject: ARAFAT IS INTRODUCED TO DIPLOMATIC CORPS
TAGS: PFOR, SA
To: USCINCEUR
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005